

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Omaha volunteers recognized for community service by First Lady Sally Ganem

(Lincoln, Neb.) Nebraska's First Lady Sally Ganem presented community service awards to Jessie Gotsdiner and Jenny Wysocky (National Service Award), Mikayla Flott (Outstanding Student Leader), Completely KIDS, Norris Middle School (Outstanding School Volunteer Program) and Sacred Circle Service Learning Project (Outstanding Service Learning Program) on April 12, 2013 during the annual First Lady's Outstanding Community Service Awards luncheon ceremony at the Kearney Country Club, Kearney.

Jessie Gotsdiner and Jenny Wysocky are College Possible Omaha AmeriCorps members who serve as senior coaches at Omaha South Magnet and Benson Magnet High Schools. As coaches they work with disadvantaged seniors to achieve college admission, apply for scholarships and financial aid. This year 69 seniors participated and 100% have applied to college with 75% accepted to date. The students have received over \$120,000 in scholarships, and three who have won the statewide Horatio Alger competition.

Beyond these numbers, Jessie and Jenny have inspired the students to believe in themselves and that they can attend college and be successful. The students also know that a College Possible coach like Jessie and Jenny will walk with them in their college journey. Through their tireless work with students, including many late nights of essay editing and walking students through submissions, Jessie and Jenny have truly made College Possible for these wonderful students and future college graduates. Congratulations to Jessie and Jenny. *(Jenny Wysocky was unable to attend so the College Possible representatives will present the award to her)*

Mikayla Flott is a successful achiever and her community involvement is substantial and diverse. Highlights of her recent honors include: Ten Outstanding Young Omahans; National Honor Society Volunteer of the Year; and a member of Creighton University's elite Freshman Leadership Program; and the Dean's List. Mikayla is very active at Creighton.

She was recently inducted into Wareham for Women Who Lead, is an officer for the National PanHellenic Council, serves on the New Student Orientation Board, is a C.U. Star tour guide and is the assistant editor for the Creightonian. In total, she has volunteered over 1,300 hours throughout the past 6 years and helped raise almost \$100,000 for her high school, university, and community.

Norris Middle School is home to a tremendous school volunteer program called Redbird 108. This program is a collaborative effort between the school, Completely KIDS, and the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Initially targeted for at-risk youth as a method of getting students involved, it has grown into creating service as a way for Norris "Redbirds" to identify themselves.

The heart of the program is the addition of a community resource room located within the school in room 108. This resource room was established to be a place for partnering agencies and other school staff to serve the students and their families. The student-led volunteer group provides support to students and families who are struggling with specific needs. The goal for every student is to complete 40 hours of service and currently students have completed

600 hours. The success of the program is driven by student leadership opportunities. It is truly a school community effort that is designed to embrace the needs of the school and spark proactive student engagement.

Sacred Circle Service-Learning Project, is focused on mentoring, that promotes American Indian culture by bringing together the University of Nebraska at Omaha Native American Studies students with Native American students at Omaha South Magnet High School. These relationships weren't easy to build; developing trust the first year was essential. Now every week students learn and serve together to plan pow wows, create art pieces, make moccasins, and serve the community, representing themselves and Native American culture.

The college students visit the South High students, help support their dreams, and encourage them to apply to college. Sacred Circle has seen significant outcomes to the community and increased student leadership through this sustainable program. UNO and South High students have served over 100 hours, developed mentor relationships and provided a greater connection to culture in the tribal community, and increased graduation rates of participants.

For more information about the First Lady's Outstanding Community Service Awards, visit ServeNebraska at, www.serve.nebraska.gov or contact Kimberle Hall at 402-471-6228 or 800-291-8911.

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